CHARLES NEVILLE BUCK AUTHOR of "The CALL of the CUMBERLANDS" ILLUSTRATIONS & C.D. RHODES

CHAPTER XX-Continued.

The little town itself lay dismal and rifle. helpless, with its shacks scattered over its broken and uneven levels.

Dawn, perhaps, found it hardest; for in this one day Dawn had grown up, and tomorrow would bring the boy whom she now confessed to loving. though she confessed it with self-contempt, leading a force to meet that of her own people, fighting to avenge her escape ironical reminders when she glanced down at the Christmas packages, seemed to hear over and over doin' it because ye asks it."

She had sought to avert an assassination, and it seemed that the effort would precipitate a holocaust.

Anse was very busy, but he found time to come to her that afternoon. In the bare little hotel lobby the fire light glinted on many rifles as their owners lounged about the hearth.

And in Anse she saw once more the stern side. His face was unsmiling. and in his eyes was that expression which made her realize how inflexfbly he would set about the accomplishment of the thing he had undertaken. Then, as he spoke to her, sudden softness came into his eyes.

"God knows I'm sorry," he said. "that this thing broke just now. I didn't aim that ye should be no eye

Juanita smiled rather wanly. Old Milt, he told her, would soon be re-"We ain't even goin' to keep him in the jailhouse no longer than We couldn't convict him, an it would only bring on more trouble. "Why was he arrested?" she asked

"Just to keep him out of mischief overnight," he smiled. "Even the law can be used for strategy."

blankly

"What will happen when the Mc-Briars come back?" she demanded in a shaken voice. He shook his head. "I can't hardly

But the next morning Anse Havey came again and cautioned the two women not to leave their rooms and not to keep their shutters open. All day the town lay like a turtle. tight drawn into its shell. Streets were empty. Doors were locked and shutters barred. But toward evening. to the girl's bewilderment, she saw

Haveys riding out of town instead of into it. Soon there were no more horses at the racks. By night the place which was to be assaulted to doned by its defenders.

Old Milt McBriar had ridden out in the morning, freed but wrathful, to must come with absolute certainty. meet the men who were hurrying in. The figure of Had Anse Havey she saw often from her window, but for the most part the force of Haveys had a single weapon there.

Then followed another wretched night, and with foreboon the snowempty silence of a cemetery, but with have been as empty as the gun-rack. wrapped town settled down to the early afternoon the new procession tinuous stream of McBriar borsemen each armed to the teeth, rode past the hotel and went straight to the courthouse. Then she heard again the sound she had neard on her first night in the mountains, only now it from a hundred throats.

It was the McBriar yell, and after it came a scattering of rifle and pistol shots. The clan was going away again and shooting up the town as they went, but what had happened down there at the courthouse!

CHAPTER XXI.

Later she heard the story. The Mo Briars had come expecting battle town deserted. For a time they had gone about looking for troub but found no one to oppose them Then Old Milt and his son had rid the courtbouse to demand the keys of the jail. They found Judge ering sitting in the little office, and with him, quite unarmed and witho escort, sat Bad Anse Havey. When the two McBriars, backed by a score of armed men, broke flercely into the room, others massed at their backs, crowding doorway and hall.

Judge Sidering greeted his visitors as though no intimation had ever reached him that they were con

"Come in, Milt, and have a chair," he invited.

"Cheer, hell!" shouted Milt McBriar. "Give me the keys ter thet jailbouse, an' give 'em ter me quick!"

Opening the drawer of his desk as Judge Sidering took out the big iron brass key to the little row of cella. He tossed the two across to Milt in a

Five minutes later the McBrian was back trembling with rage he had found the jail empty.

"If you're lookin' for Luke Thixton said the judge calmly, "the high sheriff took him to Louisville yester

Anse looked up and spoke slowly "I reckon it wouldn't profit ye much to harm us, Milt. We ain't armed, an' would bring on a heap of trouble."

The answer was a bellow of rare

Old Milt McBriar threw forward his

empty had gone through the crowd.

For a time the McBriar stood there debating his next step. The town Juanita, whose eyes could not seemed at his mercy. Seemed! That word gave him pause. The way home might mean twenty miles of solid ing some fresh trap?

bated long, he might not be able to control his men. He looked up—to standing his motives.

see little Milt, who was fighting back But when he reached the school she them out. Beyond the panels could be heard loud swearing and the impa-

tient shuffling of many feet. "What shall we do, son?" inquired the older man of the younger. His voice had a note of appeal and breaking power.

When Young Milt had ridden out of Peril no feudist in the hills had not notice. borne a heart fuller of hatred and was free. For Luke Thixton he had a profound contempt. He saw in the situation only a game of wits in which Anse Havey was winner.

"Well." he replied with a grin he could not repress, "hit looks right ing again." smart ter me like thar hain't nothin to do but ride on back home an' try again next time."

Outside there had been a short, sharp struggle with a mutinous spirit. These men had come for action and they did not want to ride back foiled, but the word of Old Milt had stood unchal-

and the random shots to which there second. was no reply, and again a train of horsemen were on their way into the ing?" she teased. "When you wear hills.

sat there in her empty school she was the corner until you can be cheerful. realizing that, after all, the desperate moment had only been deferred and "if ye ordered me to stand in the cor-Christmas was only two days off and her gun-rack was empty. When she had come home there had not been

There would be no Christmas tree now! The beribboned packages lay in a useless pile. Had school been in ses sion, she knew that the desks would The whole turtlelike life had drawn in its head and the countryside lay as though besieged.

On Anse Havey's book-shelves were new volumes, for Juanita was feeding his scant supply, and a softer type of poetry was being added to his frugal and stern repertoire. A number of men left the mountains and went int exile elsewhere. These were the witnesses who must testify against Luke Thixton and whose lives would not have been worth a nickel had they stayed at home.

Then came Christmas day itsel bleak and soggy with the thaw that had set in and the moody dreariness of the sky. The sun seemed to have despaired and made its course spiritessly from dawn to twilight, crawling dimly across its daily are.

Brother Anse Talbott came over to the school and found both women sit ting apathetically by an untrimmed fir ree amid a litter of forgotten pack ages. The children of Tribulation were having the sort of Christmas they had always had-a day of terror

"Hit seems like a right smart pits totally disapp'inted," mused the old preacher. "S'pose now ye put name n them gewgaws an' let me jest sorter ride round an' scatter 'em. "You dear old saint!" cried Juanita

suddenly roused out of her apathy. 'll freeze to death an' get drowned in some ford."

ther route. It took Good Anse Talbott three

days of battle with quicksand and deputy sheriffs came out of the depoi mire to finish that mission. At each and stood waiting between the tw house he told them that Juanita Hol- groups with a strained assumption of and had sent him, and the girl was canonized afresh in hearts old and rived it carried an extra coach, and at young, back in roadless coves and on

Every evening found Anse Have seated before Juanita's hearth, studyface. Every detail of her expression always known and worshiped.

point Bad Apse Havey refused to folhis trend of thought further. only ground his teeth.

"Ye damn fool," he told himsel That ain't no reason why ye shouldn' make the most of today. She's right here sow, an' she's sun an' moon an star shine and music an' sweetness.

She did not know, and he gave her no hint, that in these times, with plot and counterplots hatching on both sides of the ridge, he never made that journey in the night without inviting death. He was walking miles through black woodland trails each evening to relieve for an hour or two her lonel ness and to worship with sealed lips and a rebellious heart.

On the night before he was to go to Peril to attend the trial of Luke Thix ton he came with a very full and heavy heart. He knew that it might be a farewell. Tomorrow he must put to the test all his hold on his people Outside rose an angry chorus of and all his audacity of resolution. He voices. The news that the jail was stood at the verge of an Austerlitz or a Waterlog, and he had undertake the thing for no reason except that it

had pleased her to command it. He knew that among his own followers there were smiles for the lay through Havey territory, which power which a "furrin" woman had come to wield over him, and if one voice of Anse Havey saying: "I'm ambush. Anse Havey sat too quietly failure marred his plans those smiles it because ye asks it."

for Milt's ease of mind. Was he bait-would become derisive. It was weakness to go on as he was going, gazing The old intriguer felt baffled and at dumbly at her with boundless adora sea. He had grown accustomed to tion he dared not voice. Tonight he weighing and calculating with guileful would bluntly tell her that he was do deliberation. He balked at swift and ing these things because he loved her; impulsive action. Moreover, if he de that, while he was glad to do them. he could not let her go on misunder

the crowd at the door and locking rose to receive him, and he could see only the slimness of her graceful figure and the smile of welcome on her lips, and the man who had never been recreant before to the mandate of resolution, became tongue-tied.

She held out a hand, which he took with more in his grip than the handclasp of friendship, but that she did

"Anse," she laughed, "I've had a let hunger for vengeance, but that was ter from home today urging me to because of his father. Now his father give up and come back. They don't realize how splendidly I am going to succeed, thanks to your help. I want you to go with me soon and mark some more trees for felling. It won't be long now before they can begin build-

"I wonder," he said, looking at her with brows that were deeply drawn That counsel in the end prevailed, have time to stop talkin' about the school for a little spell an' remember that I'm a buman bein'."

"Remember that you're a human being?" she questioned in perplexity. She stood there with one hand on lenged too long to fail now. Yet he the back of her chair, her face puzzled. led back a grumbling following and He decided at once that this expresbore a discounted power. They could sion was the most beautiful she had not forget that a Havey had worsted ever worn, and he sturdily held that conviction until her eyes changed to So the spirit of the men who had laughter, when he forswore his allecome to fight vented itself in the yell giance to the first fascination for the

"Are you sure you are a human bethat sulky face you are only half hu-When it was all over and Juanita man. I ought to make you stand in "I reckon," he said a little bitterly



Christmas Was Only Two Days Off and Her Gun Rack Was Empty.

er I'd just about do it. I reckon that's about how much manhood I've go

The morning of the trial dawned o a town prepared to face a bloody day Long before train-time crowds

drifted down to the station. As though by common consent, the track and the Haveys on the other. For an hour they massed there, low ering of face, yet quietly waiting

swered briefly. "I reckon I kin go river and each crowd moved a little awaiting the supreme moment.

knew once more they were defented They had come to wrest a prisone trained soldiery. Behind the opener sashes of the coach they saw a solid service-hats. Every window bristies Then, while the train was held be

its usual brief stop, and while those der his grave face be masked a breakrife-barrels were trained impartially ing heart. His star was setting, and since he was no longer young and ut terly incapable of bending, he sick on Haveys and McBriars, a line of soldiers began pouring out into the roadbed and forming cordons along each side of the track. Both lines and men spoke of him as an invalid

noved slowly but unwaveringly forward, pressing back the crowds before heir urgent bayonets. Two wicked-looking gatting guns vere unloaded from the baggage car. dominance began drifting asunder. One mill day when a group of Mc-Briars met with their sacks of grist at and, tending them as men might handle beloved pets, came squads

whose capes were faced with artiller; a water-mill, someone put the ques-tion: "Who's a-goin' ter go down than Shortly a compact little procession in column of fours, with the gatling guns at its front and a hollow square at its center, was marching briskly to the courthouse. In the hollow square a voice drawled: "Hit hain't a goin went the defendant, handcuffed to the ter be me. What's Luke Thixton ter sheriff. Without delay or confusion me, anyhow? He didn't nuver lend

the gatling guns were put in place me no money." commanding the courthous square and one casting its many-eyed lance up the hillside at the back. Then, with the bayonets of sentries crossed at the doors, the bell in the cupola rang while Judge Sidering walked calmly into the building and

nstructed the sheriff to open court. His honor had directed that every nan save officials who sought admisfilled. ion should be disarmed at the door. Luke Thixton bent forward in his chair and growled into the ear of Old

Milt McBriar, who sat at his left. "I've got as much chanst hyar as fish on a hilltop. Hain't ye goin' ter do nothin' for me?"-and Milt looked about helplessly and swore under his

One onlooker there had not been earched. Young Jeb bore the creden tials of a special deputy sheriff, and inder his coat was a holster with its flap unbuttoned. While the panel was eing selected; while lawyers wran gled and witnesses testified; while the court gazed off with half-closed eyes. rousing only to overrule or sustain motion, young Jeb sat with his arms on the table, and never did his eyes eave the face of the accused.

It was a very expeditious trial. Judge Sidering glanced at the faces of Old Milt and young Jeb, and had no desire to prolong the agony of those hours. The defense half-heartedly relied upon the old device of a false alibi, which the state promptly punc tured. Even the lawyers seemed in haste to be through, and set a limit on their arguments.

At the end his honor read brief in-

structions, and the panel was locked in its room.

Then the McBriars drew a little closer around the chair where Old Milt waited, and the militia captain strengthened his guard outside and began unostentatiously sprinkling uni formed men through the dingy courtroom until the hodden-gray throng was flecked with blue.

At length there came a rap on the door of the juryroom, and instantly the low drone of voices fell to a hush His honor poured a glass of water from the chipped pitcher at his elbow while Luke Thixton and Milt McBriar for all their immobility of feature braced themselves. Like some rest less animal of many legs, the rough throng along the courtroom benches scraped its feet on the floor.

Young Jeb shifted his chair a little so that the figure of the defendant might be in an uninterrupted line of vision. His right hand quietly slipped back." under his coat, and his fingers loosened a weapon in its holster and sursed the trigger.

Then, with a dragging of shoe-leath er, the twelve "good men and true" shambled to a semicircle before the bench, gazing stolidly and blankly at illness. But just as the winter's siege the rows of battered law books which was ending Young Milt came home.

There they stood awkwardly in the heard that the old feudist was dead. gaze of all. Judge Sidering glanced into the beetling countenance of their foreman and inquired in that bored voice which seems a judicial affectation even in questions of life and death: "Gentlemen, have you agreed upon a verdict?"

The foreman nodded. The sheet of paper, which he passed to the clerk. had been signed by more than one juror with a cross because he could not write.

"We, the jury," read the clerk in a clear voice, "find the defendant, Luke Thixton, guilty as charged in the indictment-" There, although he had not yet reached the end, he indulged dramatic pause, then read on the more important clause in the terms of placing of the penalty in the hands of the jurors-"and fix his punishment at death."

As though relieved from a great pressure, young Jeb McNash withdrew his hand from his holster and settled back in his chair with fixed muscle Judge Sidering's formal question broke in on the dead quiet, you all, gestlemen?" and twelve

Soldiers filed in from the rear. In less than thirty seconds the prisone had disappeared. Outside the gatling guns remained in place, and the troop patrolled the streets.

For two days the McBriars stave in town, but the troops lingered long er, and in that time Luke had again been taken back to Louisville.

Once more Old Milt led back a dis gruntled faction with no more spi a program than to go home and bide Luke back to bang him, his friends would have one final chance. A seeming of quiet, under which

through the cabins of the McBriar de pendents. It was a note of waning faith and loyalty for their chief. Old Milt read the signs and felt that nizion was now a thing upon

wrath smoldered, settled over hill and

With Milt "ailin'," there was no one to take up the reins of clan govern ment, and those elements that had been held together only by his iron

an' take Luke Thixton away from ther Haveya now thet Old Milt's down an' There was a long stlence, and at last

"I reckon thar's a heap o' sense in thet," answered another. "'Pears like, when I come ter recollect, mos' of ther fightin' an' fursin' I've done in my time hain't been in my own quarrels nohow." And slowly that spirit spread.

When Anse Havey went over to the school one day Juanita took him again to the rifle-rack, now once more well

"Have a look, my lord bar-



His Honor Had Directed That Every Man-Save Officials-Should Be Disarmed at the Door.

arian," she laughed "Mars is pay ing me tribute. So shall it ever be with tyranny."

Slowly, and one by one, Anse Havey ook up the pieces and examined them "It ain't only Mars that's paying ye ribute," he thought, but he only said: That's all right. I seem to see more McBriar guns there than Havey guns would suit me all right if ye got the last one of 'em."

"Hadn't you as well hang yours there, too?" she teased. "I'm still illing to give you the honors of war. But he only smiled. "I'll hang mine up last of all, I reckon. Luke Thix ton ain't hung yet, and there's other louds a brewin' besides that.'

"What clouds?" she asked. There was a bunch of surveyors through here lately," he replied slowly. "They just sort of looked 'round and went away. Some day they'll come

"And then?" Anse Havey shrugged his shoulders

I may need my gun." he said. Not until it became certain that he must die did Old Milt send for his son, or even permit him to be told of his

Brother Anse Talbott and Juanita and a doctor who had come from Lexington were witnesses to that leave-taking. They saw the old mar beckon feebly to the boy. Young Milt came and sat on the edge of the bed schooling his features as he waited the final injunctions which, by his

code, would be mandatory for life. They all waited to hear the old lion break out in a final burst of vindictive ess, to see him lay upon his boy's young shoulders the unfinished or leals of his hatreds. But it was the eve of the father, not the feudist that gazed up from the pillow. His wasted ingers lay affectionately on his son's knee and his voice was gentle.

"Son," said the old man, "I'd love ter hev ye live at peace of ye kin. I've done tried ther other way an' hit's kilt me. I'd ruther ye'd let my fights be urled along with my body. Anse Havey's goin' ter run things in these nountings. He's a smarter man than me. I couldn't never make no peace with Anse Havey, but the things that's always stood betwixt us lays a long way back. Mebby you an' him mought leaves thet with you; but hit took

Here he broke off exhaustedly, and or a time seemed fighting for breath At last be added: "I've knowed all ong thet Luke killed Fletch McNash. thought I'd ought ter tell ye."

A week after the death of the old eader Young Milt rode over to the house of Anse Havey, and there he ound Jeb McNash. The two young men looked at each other with on. Just after the death of his ather Jeb would not willingly have enewed their quarrel, and as for Young Milt, he no longer felt resent

"Anse," said the heir to McBria leadership, "I rid over here ter offer ye my hand. I've done found out that Luke is es guilty es hell. I didn't be-lieve hit afore. So fur es I'm concerned, he kin hang, an' i'm goin' ter tell every McBriar man that will harken ter me ther same thing. So

lad. "I'm against the snootin' of any man from the la'rel."

Just as the earliest flowers began to peep out with shy faces in the woods, and the first softness came to the air, men began rearing a scaffold in the courthouse yard at Peril.

One day a train brought Luke Thixton back to the hills, but this time only a few soldiers came with him. and they were not needed. Juanita tried to forget the significance of that Friday, but she could not, for all the larger boys were absent from school, and all day Thursday the road had been sprinkled with horses and wagons. She knew with a shudder that they were going to town to see the hanging. A gruesome fascination of interest attached to so unheard of an event as a McBriar clansman dving on a Havey scaffold with his people stand

ing by idle. But Luke Thixton, going to his death there among enemies, went without flinching, and his snarling lips even twisted a bit derisively when mounted the scaffold, as they had twisted when he declined Good Anse Talbott's ministrations in the jail.

Since he must die among enemies he would give them no weakness over

which to gloat in memory. He raised his head, and his snarl turned slowly and unpleasantly into a grin of contempt, and his last words were a picturesque curse called down alike on the heads of the foes who put him to death and on the false friends who had failed him.

Afterward Young Milt and Bad Anse

shook hands, and the younger man Ewes . .

said to the older: "Now that I've proved to ye that I meant what I said, I reckon we can make a peace that'll endure a spell, can't we?"

And Anse answered: "Milt, I've been honin' we could ever since the day we watched for the feller that aimed to burn down the school."

at the school and brave rows of flowers appeared in the garden. At first her college had been a kin-

dergarten in effect, but now as Juani ta stood on the porch at recess she wondered if any other schoolmistresa had ever drawn about her such a -but submitting grudgingly to the combing of the hair they sought to adorn. There were larger boys and girls, too, and even a half-dozen men just now pitching horseshoes and smoking pipes-and they also were

learning to read and write. In the afternoons women rode in on mules and horses or came on foot, and Juanita taught them not only letters and figures, but lessons looking to

cleaner and more healthful cabins. May came with smiles and songs in the sky from sunrise to sunset, and in the woods, where the moisture rose and tender greens were sending out their hopeful shoots, the wild flowers unfolded themselves. Then Juanita Hens, 5 lbs, and over, lb... 16 Holland and Anse Havey would go to gether up to the ridge and watch the Springs, lb... 18 ©20 great awakening across the brown and gray humps of the hills, and under their feet was a carpet of glowing

petals. Anse Havey had never had such a companionship, and hidden things be Eggs, graded No. 1 net, F. O. B.

gan to waken in him. spring breeze caressing the curling tendrils at her temples, and blowing her gingham evint and blowing between the curling tendrils at her temples, and blowing between the curling tendrils at her temples, and blowing the curling tendril tendrils at her temples, and blowing the curling tendril her gingham skirt about her slim ankles, and pointed off, smiling, to his house, he dropped his head in mock shame.

"'Only the castle moodily gloomed sation, and the man laughed boyishly. Packing stock "I reckon ye haven't seen the castle lately," he said. "Ye wouldn't hardly know it. It's gettin' all cleaned up an' made civilized. The eagle's nest is turnin' into a sure-enough bird cage."

"Who's changing now?" she bantered. "Am I civilizing you or"-her Carrots, cwt. 2.75@3.00 eyes danced with badinage-"are you preparing to get married?" Onions, table, doz.40@ .50

His face flushed and then became lmost surly. "Who'd marry me?" he savagely demanded.

"I'm sure I don't know," she teased Whom have you asked?" He bent a little forward and said

slowly: "Once ye told me I was wasting my youth. Ye lowed I ought to be captain of my soul. If I found a woman that I wanted and she wouldn't have mewhat ought I to do about it?"

"There are two courses prescribe in all the correspondence schools, and both are perfectly simple," she announced with mock gravity. "One is simply to take the lady first and ask her afterward. The other is even easier; get another girl." "Oh," he said. He was hurt because

she had either not seen or had pretended not to see his meaning. She had not grasped the presur dream and effrontery of his heart. His voice for a moment becar

dematical as he added: "Sometime I think ye've played hell in these That spring silent forces were a work in the hills; as silent and less eneficent than the stirring sap and

the brewing of showers. Three men in the mountains were now fully convinced that what the world needs the world will have, and they were trying to find a solution to the question which might make their own people sharers in the gain, in stead of victims. These three were in check, and make them slow to sel

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That spring new buildings went up

Chapter XXII.

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Chapter XXII.

That spring new buildings went up

Chapter XXII.

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